

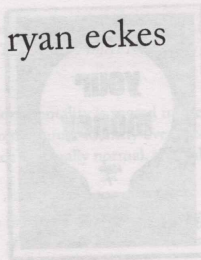
# W E T M O N E Y

r y a n e c k e s



# wet money

ryan eckes



"The pontification of the wet money is a kind of belief that obedience is the only way to achieve a position of power. It is a belief that obedience is the only way to achieve a position of power. It is a belief that obedience is the only way to achieve a position of power."

—Sarah, *Imagination*

"There is in our lives a televisual moment that one is afforded as a consumer of everything, a spectator of everything. The great spectator of the world. Nothing happens here, at least nothing that is not entertaining."

—Thomas Brand, from *The Rice Clerk*

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the pure products of the liberal imagination  
do not exist

the sky is cash only

"Our concern for novelty and so-called originality or newness leads us to become a nation of cultural amnesiacs."

for an earth of  
its own —Lorenzo Thomas, from 1999 interview,  
*The Poetry Project Newsletter*

some hard pressed  
houses in the suburbs

"The gentrification mentality is rooted in the belief that obedience to consumer identity over recognition of lived experience is actually normal, neutral and value-free."

—Sarah Schulman, from *The Gentrification  
of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*

"There is in our lives a televisual remove that one is afforded as a consumer of everything, a spectator of everything. The great spectator of the world. Nothing happens here, at least nothing that is not entertaining."

—Dionne Brand, from *The Blue Clerk*



the pure products of the liberal imagination  
do not exist

the sky is cash only

you drive the car  
to work

for an earth of  
its excrement

some hard pressed  
house in the suburbs—

some bill—

split

every time you mourn a republican  
a kitten chokes to death  
and it's back to school  
in the smoke of productivity  
there's a pillow in a trash can  
in front of my building  
houses are for sale up & down  
the make-believe  
what do you want  
a new career  
a box fan in the window  
a box of old how-to  
books on proof  
in the pudding  
a televised-ass life  
gas mileage alone  
in the dark  
a last laugh that lets you  
sleep  
and beyond what dollar  
do you stop meaning  
what you say  
and wake up on a cruise  
where the ocean says *leave me alone*  
from the gutted prayer  
in your throat  
proving your puppethood  
enough to renounce  
the profit motive  
forever  
so we can be friends  
and i can stop trying  
to solve  
my own murder

which is a real drag  
since i'm still alive  
waiting in line  
for my certificate of salvage  
from the department of motor vehicles  
on a tuesday  
if i have to scrape out  
someone else's dream  
to bury it properly  
i will scrape out  
someone else's dream  
to bury it properly

but somehow the line has gotten longer, people must have burred  
in front of you.



## a book of stamps

to be on a stamp, you have to be dead ten years. if you were president, only five years.

you learn the rules standing in line at the post office.

in a book called *Standing in Line for Death*, CAConrad wrote, "let us write the news on your newborn's face."

the news today is one capitalist clapped for another but didn't really mean it.

one forever stamp costs 55 cents.

the stamp is self-adhesive. you don't need to lick it.

you want to be liked, if not licked, and affixed to a letter bearing good news.

how to be liked, you wonder.

to be liked, you might perform, you might lie, you might run for president.

you might play dead so you can be part of america.

you might have to.

you might stand in line for a long time while a baby cries and cries.

you check to see who likes you today. look down at your phone for the little hearts.

the phone is your boss. it waits for you to perform. it pays you nothing. you pay *it*.

you don't know who got paid to make the phone. how much or how little. you wonder if they too are standing in line somewhere else in the world.

famous people, people of the stamp, don't care if you know or like the people who made them famous, the people who worked for them.

but famous people, people of the stamp, want you to like them.

famous people, people of the stamp, keep changing their picture on the stamp so that you keep liking them.

you cannot like them enough.

you are on a stamp, too. but it does not get you anywhere. the postman ignores everything under 55 cents.

but you can play the stamp game. like a student in the fox school of business. you play the game while standing in line, waiting for the present.

you hope the present arrives soon. you hope that you have enough to offer it.

you hope that what you *are* and what you *have* are somehow equal.

and you hope that equality lasts forever.

you hope that the hands fall off the clock and paradise grows up around you.

you know that you have worked hard, that you have played the stamp game well, even if few people have received your messages.

surely your points have been adding up and the judges know how to count.

but somehow the line has gotten longer. people must have butted in front of you.

frustrated, you begin stamping the ground w/ your foot. you begin protesting.

the hands of the clock are now moving counterclockwise.

your hair turns gray and you look around you wildly. you call for those near you to join in your protest, since they, obviously, are no better off than you are.

but everyone just stares at you.

*would you stop making a scene, they implore you.*

*can't you see that none of us wants to be here, anyway, they say.*

*shbbb, would you just be patient!*

*stop acting like a child!*

*you're embarrassing us!*

then, as if to pacify you, postal workers come over to your part of the line and begin handing out boots to people, single boots, brand-new shiny black boots.

everyone in line then begins licking the bottoms of their boots, lapping at the soles like happy kittens.

impressed upon, you look down at your new boot, smell the fresh leather, then look up at the clock, which has begun ticking clockwise once again.

## american federation of teachers

i became a teacher to pay my rent  
an adjunct is not an apprentice  
i tried to explain at debrief  
a onesie w/ a logo pulled over my face  
at a desk in an office  
next to the young organizer  
who would get fired  
for succumbing to boredom  
like the guy before him  
and the woman after him  
who failed to like her boss enough  
we were trying to build a citywide union  
of academics  
but nobody was an academic  
that's not a real thing  
teaching is a job  
to pay your rent  
organizing can be a job  
to pay your rent  
as anything can be a job  
to pay your rent  
the union couldn't hear this  
it was run by 6-figured managers  
who pitted us against each other  
they said get out the vote  
for the democratic party  
a bunch of landlords  
committed to our disposability  
and that's where donald trump  
comes from

## american history

when they say "rebuild the middle class"  
they mean build a new stadium  
on top of the old new one  
using the cheapest labor possible  
& wear your hat proudly  
on opening day  
which is every day  
we're having a grand re-opening  
today and smile  
voting is now open  
you can vote for the all-stars  
every day  
the last word is yours  
a brand new stadium  
citizens bank park  
ice cream in heaven  
i paid for this  
w/ my vote  
every vote counts  
every vote pulled himself up  
by his own bootstraps  
every vote did it all by himself

every vote put himself thru yale  
every vote started from the bottom  
now we're here  
every vote bought his son  
a baseball team  
every vote mission accomplished  
every vote ice cream in my face  
you votes don't know how  
easy you have it  
back in my day voting  
was fucking hard  
i threw the first pitch  
40 years ago  
it was a ball  
but i was right  
all along  
the president shook my hand  
rush limbaugh signed my ass  
it was *me*  
all that ever was



## wet money

to be rehired every other breath  
as if you were never there  
nothing ever happened  
you never worked here  
we never knew each other  
the waves crash the shore  
you were never here

## gasoline and calvinism

when they say "flexibility"  
they mean gumby got a raise  
for being nice  
so why can't you  
now watch this drive

people think they're going somewhere  
then a plane flies thru your dream

who was it

who built this city,  
that city

who speaks for you  
when you speak

dozens of little cops point  
at each other  
in an office

dollars fly out  
of their mouths

it's the gig economy

you were going to write me  
that letter of recommendation

heaven is waiting  
for the applause

## injury music

when they say "nothing is free"  
they mean "you work for me"

when they say "we don't condone violence"  
they mean "you work for me"

when they cart you off the field on a stretcher  
thousands of little boss-slaves cheering on  
your pain

the super bowl of cheerios  
in a sink

this complete breakfast  
of losers

i wipe my mouth  
w/ a napkin

everything is free

the anthem is a dead white prayer

silly string in the street  
the day after

waterfalls are not  
hair

states are not  
stars

what flag are you  
talking about

what do you mean by  
"nation"

do you mean the bruises  
all over your body

do you mean the people  
who nursed you back up

who are you now  
all washed up

## insurance

you wanna tell me the future  
like a professional  
the light turns green  
there are no cars  
i have no money

in a file labeled "the haters"  
quotes grow from trees  
that don't speak

an owl looks at you  
as if it came from nothing  
which it did not

this complex breakfast  
its eyes swirl in bark  
of older tree, insane,  
wise, there

you will learn to live  
with an idea of being good  
among neighbors in competition

time will stop breathing  
everyone afraid  
of everyone & everyone  
gripping a back-up plan

how much can i pay  
every month  
to just stand here  
like a definition  
in the contract  
written by one person

a rich person  
who will stab me  
in the back  
at the drop  
of a dime

the rain waves the grasses away, the bus waves up its windows  
the rain, all small talk, perhaps even to sleep  
and later the pattern on roof gulls open a direction

how strange to be a house and to look outside  
there's a statue of a headless secretary, a bird flights on the neck  
and wood, a tree

happy international anything month

the sun bakes the hills free of smoke

no one can pronounce the hardest, only some blood of the past

the blood turns moon into rain

leaders say be a good person and the system will work

but every person turns to rain

you can call it the memory of justice

the sun cracks open the streets



dear customer,

one person isn't going to fix it  
all for you

the manager is out to lunch  
w/ another manager  
counting their votes

so you'll have to just  
be a person

on the same level  
as the person  
who is serving you

right now  
older tree, manne,  
wine, there

you will learn to live  
without an idea of being good  
among neighbors in competition

none will stop breathing  
everyone afraid  
of everyone & everyone  
gripping a back-up plan

how much can i pay  
every month  
to just stand here  
like a definition  
in the contrast  
written by one person

the rain

a skull with wings was a way of thinking once, waving

goodbye forever in stone

the rain waves the graves away, the last word, no statue to become

the rain, all small talk, pushes you to sleep

and later the patter on roof pulls open a dream

how strange to be a house and to look outside

there's a statue of a headless mercenary, a bird alights on the neck

red woodpecker

happy international anything month

the sun bakes the hills free of words

no one can pronounce the borders, only some blood of the past

the blood turns moon into rain

leaders say be a good person and the system will work

but every person turns to rain

you can call it the memory of justice

the sun cracks open the streets

dust bunnies hop on the havenue

we're coming to take all your things

love,  
the rain

## the deal

clouds are laughs  
everyone knows that

you have to peel off  
the leaders one by  
one from your skin

& throw em at the wall  
like beer bottles  
after the afterparty

then look up  
sun drunk in your skull  
till a fox jumps out

clouds are laughs  
i called the bar the poem  
by accident

the poem's been open  
since 1930

it was a school  
now it's not

i stumbled in  
like a regular  
i didn't have to

there were no principals  
poets were talking  
about a leaderless movement

you heard what neruda said  
we'll eat in bed & fornicate  
in the kitchen if we want

he said it in a movie  
to a communist woman  
sick of cleaning bourgeois toilets

when we're all equal  
who will we all be like  
the poets wanted to know

like what kind of fucking jobs  
would we have  
in order to feed each other

come over at 9, bring a 6  
we'll have a reflection  
of accidents

daily city thoughts were bark  
that cracked off  
the dog of a tree

petaled into some new thing  
we could use or toss  
or riff off

we taught each other how  
to carry shards of heaven  
friends left for us

what're you working on now  
a rose petal in my heart  
pocket, a procession

of looping desire & loss  
a book of fishes  
that mirror clouds

we could put all our books  
together to make  
one book of fish

we pasted our poems  
on storefront windows  
and ran

laughs passed though  
our fingers  
a school of fish

the poem won't go away  
clouds are laughs  
everyone knows that

one day the poets all  
showed up in the street  
this is real, the poem said

this is real  
the poem will open  
forever

the poem won't go away  
it will happen again  
the poets started showing up

the poets fought for rent control  
the poets fought for healthcare  
the poets fought for education

the poets fought for socialism  
the poets fought for communism  
the poets fought for open borders

and the grave won't shut up  
but it's okay

the grave won't shut up  
it's okay



he said it in a movie  
the grave keeps singing  
we believe the customers  
are the future

so the students shut it down  
the students shut it down

the students shut it down  
over & over  
the poem won't go away

the future is absent  
children are children  
clouds are laughs

students are anyone  
students are anyone  
who know the deal

petaled into some new thing  
we could use or toss  
or ditch it

we taught each other  
to carry clouds of heaven  
friends left for us

what're you working on now  
a rose petal in my hair  
pocket, a procession

of looping desire & loss  
a book of fishes  
that mirror clouds

we could put all our books  
together to make  
one book of fish

Ryan Eckes is a poet from Philadelphia. His previous books are *fine nothing* (2019), *General Motors* (2018), *Valu-Plus* (2014), *Old News* (2011), and *when i come here* (2007). Recent poems can be read online in *Prolit*, *Entropy*, *The Tiny*, *Recenter Press Journal*, *Sundog Lit*, *DUSIE* and *Tripwire*.



radicalpaperweight@gmail.com  
radicalpaper.tumblr.com  
@stolenpaper

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2020



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2020

"copyright is for cops"

